

Remarks

This application has been carefully reviewed in light of the Office Action mailed November 3, 2006. At the time of the Office Action, claims 1-20 were pending in the application. In the Office Action, the Examiner rejects claims 1-20. By this Amendment, Applicants have amended claims 1, 3, 5, 10, 11, 12, 14 and 18-20 to clarify the subject matter which the Applicants claim as the invention and to advance prosecution of this case. No new matter has been introduced by these amendments. Applicants do not admit that these amendments were necessary as a result of any cited art. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the above application in view of the following remarks.

Objection to the Drawings

The Examiner has objected to the drawings “because the examiner would appreciate it if the applicant would keep a drawing on one page as oppose to splitting them in half and putting them on 2 separate pages.” (Office Action, November 3, 2006, p. 2.) Applicants have carefully reviewed the drawings and believe that the Examiner’s objection is directed to the following Figure pairs: Figures 4a and 4b; Figures 5a and 5b; Figures 6a and 6b; Figures 7a and 7b; Figures 8a and 8b; Figures 9a and 9b; and Figures 10a and 10b. Applicants respectfully traverse this objection because correction is not required.

37 C.F.R. § 1.84(h) (emphasis added), entitled “Standards for drawings,” provides:

(h) Views. The drawing must contain as many views as necessary to show the invention. The views may be plan, elevation, section, or perspective views. Detail views of portions of elements, on a larger scale if necessary, may also be used. All views of the drawing must be grouped together and arranged on the sheet(s) without wasting space, preferably in an upright position, clearly separated from one another, and must not be included in the sheets containing the specifications, claims, or abstract. Views must not be connected by projection lines and must not contain center lines. Waveforms of electrical signals may be connected by dashed lines to show the relative timing of the waveforms.

(1) Exploded views. Exploded views, with the separated parts embraced by a bracket, to show the relationship or order of assembly of various parts are permissible. When an exploded view is shown in a figure which is on the same sheet as another figure, the exploded view should be placed in brackets.

(2) Partial views. When necessary, a view of a large machine or device in its entirety may be broken into partial views on a single sheet, or extended over several sheets if there is no loss in facility of understanding the view. Partial views drawn on separate sheets must always be capable of being linked edge to edge so that no partial view contains parts of another partial view. A smaller scale view should be included showing the whole formed by the partial views and indicating the positions of the parts shown. When a portion of a view is enlarged for magnification purposes, the view and the enlarged view must each be labeled as separate views.

(i) Where views on two or more sheets form, in effect, a single complete view, the views on the several sheets must be so arranged that the complete figure can be assembled without concealing any part of any of the views appearing on the various sheets.

(ii) A very long view may be divided into several parts placed one above the other on a single sheet. However, the relationship between the different parts must be clear and unambiguous.

The Applicants have complied with 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.84(h)(2) and (h)(2)(i) with respect to the drawings identified above. In each instance of a Figure pair, the “a” Figure represents the top portion of a graphical user interface (GUI) and the “b” Figure represents the bottom portion of a GUI. The top portion and bottom portion views are arrangible such that the complete GUI can be assembled without concealing any part of any of the views appearing on the various sheets. The understanding of the GUIs is not lost by being broken into “a” and “b” Figures. For at least these reasons, the Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to withdraw this objection.

Objection to Claim 14

The Examiner has objected to claim 14 because the term “operably” should be “operable,” according to the Examiner. The Applicants have amended claim 14 to recite “operable.” For at least this reason, the Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to withdraw this objection.

**Rejection of Claims 1-20 Under 35 U.S.C. § 112,
Second Paragraph, as being Indefinite**

Claims 1-20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, ¶ 2, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicants regard as the invention. Applicants traverse this rejection because the pending claims comply with 35 U.S.C. § 112, ¶ 2.

According to the Examiner, claims 1, 11 and 14 recite the limitation “the group” in the preamble of claims 1 and 11 and (i) of claim 14. The Examiner states that there is insufficient antecedent basis for this limitation in the claims. Without waiver or prejudice, claims 1, 11 and 14 have been amended to recite “the group consisting of.” Therefore, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to withdraw this rejection with respect to claims 1-20.

According to the Examiner, claims 1 and 14 are incomplete as omitting the essential steps of advising a customer on service needs and scheduling of a vehicle service appointment. Without waiver or prejudice, the Applicants have amended claims 1 and 14 to recite “an online vehicle service method” and “an online vehicle service system,” respectfully. For at least this reason, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to withdraw this rejection with respect to claims 1-10 and 14-20.

**Rejection of Claims 1, 2, 6-15 and 18 Under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e)
as Being Anticipated by Himes (U.S. Publication No. 2003/0191660)**

Claims 1, 2, 6-15 and 18 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being

anticipated by *Himes*. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection because *Himes* fails to teach or suggest claims 1, 2, 6-15 or 18.

Himes fails to teach or suggest independent claim 1 for many reasons. For example, claim 1 requires “if the service inquiry ... is a recall request, the input information includes a vehicle identification number or the vehicle make, vehicle model year, and vehicle model.” This limitation is not provided by *Himes*. The Examiner cites to ¶ [0018] in support of *Himes* providing this limitation. (Office Action, November 3, 2006, p. 4.) ¶ [0018] (emphasis added) is reproduced below:

[0018] In a preferred embodiment of the invention depicted in FIG. 1, a card 110 is inserted into card reader 120. The card 110 contains customer and vehicle information, including name, address, phone numbers, vehicle identification number (VIN), warranty information and e-mail address. In addition, the card also contains customer specific maintenance schedules and coupon information, including recommended vehicle maintenance schedules, a record of the customer's last 50 visits, and discounts and free services. The kiosk or data entry terminal 130 is equipped with software that enables it to read and process the information provided by the card 110. For example, the software may offer the customer the option of accessing a service area 140 when the customer's car needs to be repaired, or an option to access the early bird drop off 150 area, when the customer is dropping off the car to be repaired by the dealership. Alternatively, the software may offer the customer the option of accessing a sales area 160, when the customer wants to buy a car.

According to the Examiner, “it would be inherent that a recall request would fall under recommended services.” (Office Action, p. 4 (emphasis added).) At best, the recommended services of *Himes* relate to “specific maintenance schedules ..., including recommended vehicle maintenance schedules.” ¶ [0018]. Maintenance schedules are periodic, recommended schedules for maintenance defined before a vehicle is put into use, while recalls are aperiodic, required and based on a safety concern or regulatory requirement typically defined after the vehicle is put into use. Recall requests are not inherent in light of recommended maintenance services.

The Examiner further cites to ¶¶ [0022] and [0024] of the *Himes* reference for a teaching of the above-identified limitation. ¶¶ [0022] and [0024] are reproduced below:

[0022] The preferred embodiment of the present invention improves upon conventional systems by providing data, as shown on FIG. 2, that are not available in conventional systems. For example, the Trade-in Accrual 210 is an amount that can be based on a percentage of the total coupons used to date, or it can be a fixed amount specified by the dealership customer. The vehicle warranty 220 provides the ability to add information regarding the warranty, such as a simple "Yes" or "No", or an actual identification number or description. The Amount Saved This Visit 230 keeps track of the amount of money the customer has saved through the application of various coupons during the current visit. The Total Saved 240 is a cumulative amount the customer has saved during the customer's ownership of the card. Other data on the maintenance schedule screen 202 include: the customer name 203, the mileage 204, the previous mileage 205, the VIN 206, a notice area 207, selection boxes 208, and recommended services 209. The maintenance schedule screen 202 also includes areas for the most-commonly requested departments and functions, such as oil 211, inspection 212, parts 213, vehicle purchase 214, services 215, referral awards 216, tires 217, and extras 218, such as car accessories.

* * *

[0024] The various numbered elements of FIG. 6 represent the respective fields in the indicated locations in the actual screen display exhibited in FIG. 5. The name field 601 indicates the name of the customer in the current user session. The auto field 602 indicates the name of the automobile of the user in the current session. The VIN field 603 indicates the VIN of the automobile for the session. The extended warranty field 604 indicates whether or not an extended warranty is currently in affect for the automobile. The mileage field 605 indicates the current mileage of the vehicle. The previous mileage field 606 indicates the mileage of the vehicle at the last recorded visit to the dealership. The Loyalty Card balance field 607 indicates the current balance under the Loyalty Card for that user for that automobile. The total amount saved 608 indicates the total amount saved by the user on this Loyalty Card to date. The trade-in accrual field 609 indicates the trade-in accrual for this customer and vehicle. The save this visit field 610 indicates the amount saved in this visit by the Loyalty Card and its discounts.

The visit number element 611 indicates the visit number being recalled on the screen from the smart card. The mileage field 612 indicates the mileage at the time of the visit number in element 611. The date field 613 indicates the date of the visit number in element number 611. The coupons used field 614 indicates the coupons used at the visit number indicated in field 611. The maintenance performed field 615 indicates the maintenance performed at the visit indicated in field 611. The return field 616 allows the user to move to other displays. A variety of displays can be used displaying a variety of information stored on the smart card, or generated at the current user visit for new maintenance and service, or information retrieved from the dealer management system, or other information.

These passages, as well as the rest of *Himes* do not teach or suggest “if the service inquiry ... is a recall request, the input information includes a vehicle identification number or the vehicle make, vehicle model year, and vehicle model.” To the contrary, the recommended services 209 shown on FIG. 2 are recommended maintenance (i.e., change oil and lube) or preventative inspection (i.e., 23-point inspection). FIG. 6 also does not disclose recall requests, as claimed. For at least this reason, claim 1 is patentable over the *Himes* reference, and therefore, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to withdraw this rejection.

Moreover, claim 1 requires “receiving input information regarding the potential service of [a] vehicle ... wherein the input information is used to determine whether service is advised for the vehicle.” *Himes* fails to teach or suggest this limitation. The Examiner cites to ¶ [0019] for an alleged teaching of this limitation. ¶ [0019] is reproduced below:

[0019] The customer accesses the desired area through an input device such as the touch-screen 165. In addition, other input devices may also be provided, such as the keyboard 170 or the mouse 180. When the customer has completed his or her session, the data received from the data entry terminal 130 is communicated via cable or radio-frequency (not shown) to the dealer management system 190 (“DMS”). One example of a DMS used in a preferred embodiment is the ERA system 190, developed by Reynolds and Reynolds, Inc. of Dayton, Ohio, but other DMSs may be used in the present invention. The data

received from the data entry terminal 130 are used to populate the information fields on the DMS 190. Additional information regarding the selected services, such as labor rates and other prices, are supplied from the DMS 190, and a repair order (not shown) containing the customer information, the vehicle information, and a service description is printed on the printer 135. Also, the repair order and other history of the visit can be written onto the smart card; and other information from the DMS 190 can be written onto the smart card.

According to ¶ [0019], the data received is used to print a repair order for selected services. The claimed subject matter, as recited in claim 1, is directed to “input information regarding potential service” – not actual “selected services,” as provided by *Himes*. According to claim 1, “the input information is used to determine whether service is advised for the vehicle.” According to *Himes*, this determination has already been made, and a repair order is printed to reflect the selected services. For at least this reason, claim 1 is patentable over the *Himes* reference, and therefore, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to withdraw this rejection.

Furthermore, claim 1 requires “transmitting the input information and an appointment request to a vehicle service provider to facilitate the scheduling of the vehicle service appointment.” *Himes* fails to teach or suggest this limitation. The Examiner cites to ¶ [0035] for an alleged teaching of this limitation. ¶ [0035] (emphasis added) is reproduced below:

[0035] In another embodiment of the present invention, depicted on FIG. 3, the customer uses the card 310 with the card reader 320 connected to a remote personal computer (PC) 330 located, for example, in the customer's home. The PC 330 is equipped with software programmed to perform the above functions, or a subset thereof, and the PC 330 is connected to the Internet 340, which allows the PC 330 to communicate with the ERA system 350, or any other DMS (Dealer Management System) 350 that may be used.

¶ [0035], FIG. 3, and/or “the above functions” do not provide “transmitting ... an appointment request ... to a vehicle service provider.” Rather, the Background of *Himes* identifies “the ability to schedule services ... by requesting the appointment through the

Internet ... as a need.” ¶ [0006]. ¶ [0006] is reproduced below in its entirety:

[0006] Another problem with conventional systems is the lack of integration with Internet-enabled technologies. As customers become increasingly comfortable with using the Internet to purchase goods and services, there is a growing need to be able to offer Internet-savvy customers with goods and services that have traditionally been offered in brick-and-mortar businesses. For example there is a need to provide a customer with the ability to schedule services for the customer's automobile by requesting the appointment through the Internet, rather than the traditional method of calling the dealership to make an appointment.

Himes identifies online scheduling services as “a need.” The Examiner has not cited to *Himes* in support of this need being addressed because it is not addressed by *Himes*. *Himes* fails to teach or suggest “transmitting ... an appointment request ... to a vehicle service provider.” For at least these reasons, claim 1 is patentable over the *Himes* reference, and therefore, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to withdraw this rejection.

Claims 2 and 6-10 depend from claim 1, and are patentable over the *Himes* reference for at least this reason. Moreover, claims 2 and 6-10 are patentable over the *Himes* reference for their own limitations, which are not taught or suggested by the *Himes* reference.

For example, claim 2 requires that “the input information defining vehicle symptoms pertinent to the service request includes a vehicle symptom string.” The *Himes* reference fails to teach or suggest this limitation. According to the Examiner, ¶ [0032], which is reproduced below, teaches this limitation:

[0032] The preferred embodiment further provides Administrator Card Functions to allow administrators to perform specialized functions. For example, an administrator can add store credit to a user's card 110 as a way to resolve a customer complaint. Additional information may be entered into the system to describe the customer's complaint. The administrator may also undo maintenance items and/or coupons that were previously selected and stored on the customer's card 110. An option is provided for the administrator to edit the configuration

of the system's parameters file. An administrator may also generate a report of system usage statistics. The system can provide the administrator with a listing of the system's last 10 transactions. The administrator may also set the time and date for the system, as well as shut down the system. The administrator is also provided with the ability to calibrate the touch screen 165, and to exit the session to return the computer 130 to the Windows mode.

According to *Himes*, an administrator can perform specialized functions, *e.g.*, the administrator can enter information relating to a customer complaint. This information does not define "vehicle symptoms pertinent to [a] service request," as claimed. For at least this reason, claim 2 is patentable over the *Himes* reference.

As another example, claim 7 recites "receiving available appointment dates and arrival times from the vehicle service provider." The *Himes* reference fails to teach or suggest this limitation. According to the Examiner, ¶ [0011], which is reproduced below, teaches this limitation:

[0011] In this preferred embodiment, when a customer buys a vehicle from the dealership, the dealership sends a registration form to the card service provider, such as Reynolds and Reynolds Inc. of Dayton, Ohio. The card service provider prints and programs the card 110 and mails the card to the customer on behalf of the dealership. When the customer comes into the dealership for maintenance services on the vehicle, the customer inserts the card 110 into the kiosk 130 and enters the vehicle's mileage 204. The pre-programmed maintenance schedule 202 and coupon package appears on the screen and the customer, with the assistance of the service advisor, selects the desired maintenance items 209. As maintenance items 209 are selected using selection boxes 208, various pre-programmed coupons are offered to the customer. After selection of the maintenance items 209, a "quick write-up" sheet appears on the screen. The customer and the service advisor can then enter other items of information on the screen to complete the repair order. These fields may include time and date promised, additional contact instructions, additional contact number, service advisor number and other services desired. After completion, the information on this visit is written to the card 110 and two thermal receipts are printed. The first receipt is for the customer, while the second

receipt contains the additional information from the quick write-up session and is for the service advisor's use in completing the repair order in the dealer management system.

According to *Himes*, a service advisor can enter a time and date promised into a repair order when the customer comes into the dealership for maintenance services on the vehicle. Therefore, the appointment date and time has already been scheduled, and the customer has arrived at the dealership for service. Contrarily, claim 7 recites "receiving appointment dates and arrival times" for facilitating the scheduling of a vehicle service appointment. For at least this reason, claim 7 is patentable over the *Himes* reference.

Furthermore, claim 9 recites "determining whether a recall exists for the customer's vehicle based on the input information." The *Himes* reference fails to teach or suggest this limitation. The Examiner cites to ¶ [0022] of *Himes* in support of his rejection of claim 9. At best, ¶ [0022] of *Himes* teaches the display of recommended services on a maintenance schedule screen. *Himes* does not teach or suggest the step of determining whether a recall exists based on input information. For at least this reason, claim 9 is patentable over the *Himes* reference.

Moreover, claim 10 recites "transmitting the input information to the customer prior to transmitting the appointment request." The *Himes* reference fails to teach or suggest this limitation. The Examiner cites to ¶¶ [0035], [0039] and [0040] in support of his rejection of claim 10. A review of these paragraphs and the rest of *Himes* reveals that the *Himes* reference does not provide for the transmission of the input information to the customer prior to the transmission of an appointment request, as claimed. For at least this reason, claim 10 is patentable over the *Himes* reference.

Himes fails to teach or suggest independent claim 11 for many reasons. For example, claim 1 requires "if the service inquiry is the vehicle status request, the input information includes an at least last name of a customer checking on the vehicle status wherein the input information is used to determine the vehicle status." This limitation is not provided

by *Himes*. The Examiner cites to ¶ [0022] in support of *Himes* providing this limitation. ¶ [0022] (and the rest of *Himes*) does not disclose checking on the vehicle status, as claimed. Moreover, *Himes* does not teach or suggest “receiving ... a recall request,” as recited in claim 11, for at least the reasons set forth above with respect to claim 1. Furthermore, *Himes* does not teach or suggest “transmitting ... an appointment request ... to a vehicle service provider,” as recited in claim 11, for at least the reasons set forth above with respect to claim 1. For at least these reasons, claim 11 is patentable over the *Himes* reference.

Claims 12 and 13 depend from claim 11, and are patentable over the *Himes* reference for at least this reason. Moreover, claims 12 and 13 are patentable over the *Himes* reference for their own limitations, which are not taught or suggested by the *Himes* reference.

Claim 12 recites “receiving vehicle status information from [a] vehicle service provider.” Claim 12 further recites “the vehicle status information includes a service status of work in progress.” The *Himes* reference fails to teach or suggest these limitations. According to the Examiner, ¶ [0023], which is reproduced below, teaches this limitation:

[0023] A wide variety of screen displays may be used. FIG. 5 shows one screen display for one embodiment. The screen display can be presented when a user wants to review the history of the user's visits to the dealer, and certain aspects of the user's current status. This screen can be used in conjunction with other screens in a single session, or exclusively in a session for data review only. FIG. 6 shows a block diagram of FIG. 5.

At best, FIG. 5 discloses LOYALTY CARD BALANCE, TOTAL AMOUNT SAVED, TRADE IN ACCRUAL, SAVED THIS VISIT, Coupons Used and Maintenance Performed as user status information. This “user status” information does not pertain to “a service status of work in progress,” as recited in claim 12. For at least this reason, claim 12 is patentable over the *Himes* reference.

Claim 13 recites “transmitting to the customer vehicle status information.” The *Himes* reference fails to teach or suggest this limitation. The claimed “vehicle status information” includes “a service status of work in progress,” which is not taught or suggested

by the *Himes* reference. For at least this reason, claim 13 is patentable over the *Himes* reference.

Himes fails to teach or suggest independent claim 14 for many reasons. For example, claim 14 requires “if the service inquiry ... is a recall request, the input information includes a vehicle identification number or the vehicle make, vehicle model year, and vehicle model.” This limitation is not provided by *Himes* for at least the reasons set forth above with respect to claim 1. Moreover, claim 14 requires an “at least one server computer configured to ... receive input information regarding the potential service of [a] vehicle ... wherein the input information is used to determine whether service is advised for the vehicle.” *Himes* fails to teach or suggest this limitation for at least the reasons set forth above with respect to claim 1. Furthermore, claim 14 requires the “at least one server computer configured to ... transmit the input information and an appointment request to a vehicle service provider to facilitate the scheduling of the vehicle service appointment.” *Himes* fails to teach or suggest this limitation for at least the reasons set forth above with respect to claim 1. For at least these reasons, claim 14 is patentable over *Himes*.

Claims 15 and 18 depend from claim 14, and are patentable over the *Himes* reference for at least this reason. Moreover, claims 15 and 18 are patentable over the *Himes* reference for their own limitations, which are not taught or suggested by the *Himes* reference. Claim 15 recites “the at least one server computer is additionally configured to receive available appointment dates and arrival times from the vehicle service provider.” *Himes* fails to teach or suggest this limitation for at least the reasons set forth above with respect to claim 7. Claim 18 recites “the input information defining vehicle symptoms pertinent to the service request includes a vehicle symptom string.” *Himes* fails to teach or suggest this limitation for at least the reasons set forth above with respect to claim 2.

In light of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to withdraw the rejection of claims 1-2, 6-15 and 18 in light of the *Himes* reference.

**Rejection of Claims 3-5, 16, 17, 19 and 20 as Being Unpatentable
Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as Being Obvious Over the Combination
of Himes in View of Singer (U.S. Patent No. 6,304,848) and Further
in View of Blasingame et al. (U.S. Publication No. 2002/0022975)**

Claims 3-5, 16, 17, 19 and 20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious in light of the proposed combination of *Himes*, *Singer* and *Blasingame et al.* references. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection because the proposed combination, if possible, fails to teach or suggest claims 3-5, 16, 17, 19 and 20.

Claims 3 and 19 depend from claims 1 and 14. Claims 3 and 19 each recite “determin[ing] an at least two symptom probing questions based on the vehicle symptom string and for obtaining at least two symptom probing answers from the customer.” The Examiner admits that this limitation is not taught or suggested by *Himes*. However, according to the Examiner, *Blasingame et al.* discloses a method of scheduling patients with the use of a pre-visit patient summary, which comprises medical “key” questions regarding the patient’s condition. The Examiner cites to ¶ [0010] of *Blasingame et al.* in support of his position:

[0010] In some embodiments the method further comprises electronically generating pre-visit information that includes a pre-visit patient summary responsive to the interview including information relating to the patient's condition, and then transmitting the pre-visit patient summary to the patient. Furthermore, in some embodiments the transmitted pre-visit patient summary further comprises medical “key” questions relating to the patient's condition(s), and the pre-visit physician report transmitted to the physician includes the key questions and a rationale for each of the questions. The key questions are a set of simple, guiding questions (for example 3-5 questions) for the patient to ask the physician at the upcoming visit. These questions are designed to focus the office visit. A typical key question is simple and short, and covers informational items that the physician would usually want to cover during the office visit. The patient should feel comfortable asking the physician these questions. These key questions give the patient some direction for the visit and help the physician by keeping the visit focused. Thus, the patient receives condition-specific educational resources prior to the scheduled appointment, and can arrive at

the appointment better prepared for the office visit with the physician.

The Examiner further opines that *Singer* defines that the use of symptom probing questions is old and well known. According to the Examiner, *Singer* discloses a key term recognizing means for matching medical terms used by at least one medical personnel with patient conditions. The Examiner cites to Col. 3, ll. 7-21 in support of his rejection, which is reproduced below:

The apparatus also preferably includes medical term matching means, e.g., preferably provided by a medical term matcher, responsive to the key term recognizing means for matching medical terms used by the at least one medical personnel at least with patient conditions and/or treatments. The medical term matching means preferably includes a knowledge database relating patient conditions with patient treatments of the conditions so that the knowledge base assists in further describing at least the actual condition and/or treatment of the patient by adding additional data, e.g., a more complete description, to a medical form which is or will be created. The apparatus can further include medical record creating means, e.g., preferably provided by a medical record creator, responsive to the medical term matching means for creating an actual patient medical record therefrom.

Id. (emphasis added).

The Examiner opines that it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to modify *Himes* in view of the teachings of *Blasingame et al.* and *Singer* to include symptom probing question process based on the vehicle symptom string in order for the dealership/mechanic to be aware of what would be expected when the vehicle comes in for repairs. (Office Action, November 3, 2006, p. 9.)

Neither *Blasingame et al.* nor *Singer* teach or suggest the step of “determining an at least two symptom probing questions based on the vehicle symptom string.” At best, *Blasingame et al.* discloses a medical information system in which a pre-visit interview is conducted with a patient before an office visit. The information obtained during this pre-visit interview is used to generate “key questions” for the patient to ask the physician during the

office visit. The “key questions” and answers are given to the physician prior to the office visit. The questions and answers are scripted “in an effort to focus the visit.” Fig. 17A. Moreover, “the questions are quite general, and may not be as important once you [(i.e., the physician)] make[s] a diagnosis.” *Id.* The “key questions” generated by the pre-visit interview are not used to “obtain[] at least two symptom probing answers from the customer,” as recited in claims 3 and 19. Rather, the “key questions” have already been answered by the medical information system. The answers are provided to the physician before the office visit. For at least this reason, *Blasingame et al.* does not teach or suggest claims 3 and 19.

Singer does not cure the defective teachings of *Blasingame et al.* At best, *Singer* discloses a key term recognizing means for matching medical terms used by the at least one medical personnel at least with patient conditions and/or treatments. (Col. 3, ll. 8-12.) In *Singer*, the medical personnel provides “freely dictated” information that is searched by key medical terms. This information is not provided by patients, i.e., the customers of the medical profession. Claims 3 and 19 require that the at least two symptom probing questions are used to obtain at least two symptom probing answers from the customer. This limitation is not taught or suggested by *Singer*.

For at least the reasons set forth above, claims 3 and 19 are patentable over the proposed combination of the *Himes*, *Singer* and *Blasingame et al.* references. Moreover, claims 4 and 5, which depend from claim 3, are patentable for the above-identified reasons, as well as their own limitations. Furthermore, claims 16, 17 and 20, which depend from claim 14, are patentable for the above-identified reasons, as well as their own limitations.

CONCLUSION

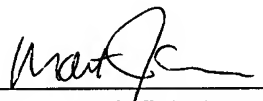
For the foregoing reasons, Applicants believe that the Office Action of November 3, 2006 has been fully responded to. Consequently, in view of the above amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully submit that the application is in condition for allowance, which allowance is respectfully requested.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any fee deficiency associated with the filing of this Paper to the Deposit Account of Applicants' assignee, Ford Global Technologies LLC, Deposit Account No. 06-1510.

If the Examiner believes that a telephone conference would advance the prosecution of this application in any manner, the Examiner is invited to contact Matthew M. Jakubowski, Attorney for Applicants, at Examiner's convenience at (248) 358-4400.

Respectfully submitted,

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